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THE
DAY OF JUDGMENT,
A
POETICAL ESSAY:

*Which gained the SEATONIAN PRIZE at
Cambridge, 1757.*

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Fellow of King's College.

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THE
DAY of JUDGMENT.

THY Justice, heavenly King, and that great Day,
When Virtue, long abandon'd, and forlorn,
Shall raise her pensive head; and Vice, that erst
Rang'd unprov'd, and free, shall sink appall'd;
I sing, advent'rous.—But what eye can pierce
The vast immeasurable realms of Space,
O'er which Messiah drives His flaming car,
To that bright region, where enthron'd He sits,
First-born of Heav'n, to judge assembled worlds,
Cloath'd in celestial radiance! Can the Muse,
Her feeble wing all damp with earthly dew,
Soar to that bright Empyreal, where, around,
Myriads of Angels, God's perpetual choir,
Hymn Hallelujahs; and in concert loud
Chaunt songs of triumph to their Maker's praise?—

Yet will I strive to sing, albeit unus'd
 To tread Poetic Soil. What tho' the wiles
 Of Fancy me enchanted ne'er could lure
 To rove o'er Fairy lands; to swim the streams
 That thro' her vallies weave their mazy way,
 Or climb her mountain tops; yet will I raise
 My feeble voice, to tell what Harmony
 (Sweet as the music of the rolling Spheres)
 Attunes the moral world: That Virtue still
 May hope her promis'd crown; that Vice may dread
 Vengeance, tho' late; that reas'ning Pride may own,
 Just, tho' unsearchable, the ways of Heaven.

Sceptic! whoe'er thou art, who sayst, the soul,
 That divine particle, which God's own breath
 Inspir'd into the mortal mass, shall rest
 Annihilate, 'till duration has unroll'd
 Her never-ending line; tell, if thou knowst,
 Why every nation, every clime, tho' all
 In Laws, in Rites, in Manners disagree,
 With one consent expect another world,
 Where Wickedness shall weep? Why Paynim Bards
 Fabled Elysian plains; Tartarean Lakes,
 Styx and Cocytus? tell, why Heli's sons

Have

Have feign'd a Paradise, of Mirth, and Love,
Banquets, and blooming Nymphs? or, rather, tell,
Why, on the brink of Orellana's stream,
Where never Science rear'd her sacred Torch,
Th' untutor'd Indian dreams of happier worlds
Behind the cloud-topt Hill? Why in each breast
Is plac'd a friendly monitor, that prompts,
Informs, directs, encourages, forbids?
Tell, why on unknown evil grief attends;
Or joy on secret good? Why conscience acts
With tenfold force, when Sicknefs, Age, or Pain,
Stands tott'ring on the precipice of Death?
Or why such Horror gnaws the guilty soul
Of dying Sinners; while the Good Man sleeps
Peaceful and calm, and with a smile expires?

Look round the world! with what a partial hand
The scale of Blifs and Misery is sustain'd!
Beneath the shade of cold obscurity
Pale Virtue lies; no arm supports her head;
No friendly voice speaks comfort to her soul;
Nor soft-ey'd Pity drops a melting tear:
But, in their stead, Contempt, and rude Disdain,
Insult the banish'd Wanderer: on she goes,

Neglected,

Neglected, and forlorn: Disease, and Cold,
 And Famine, worst of ills, her steps attend:
 Yet, patient, and to Heav'n's just will resign'd,
 She ne'er is seen to weep, or heard to sigh.

Now turn your eyes to yon sweet-smelling Bow'r,
 Where, flush'd with all the insolence of wealth,
 Sits pamper'd Vice! for Him th' Arabian Gale
 Breaths forth delicious odours; Gallia's Hills
 For Him pour Nectar from the purple vine.
 Nor think, for these he pays the tribute due
 To Heav'n: of Heav'n He never names the name;
 Save when with imprecations, dark, and dire,
 He points his Jest obscene. Yet buxom Health
 Sits on his rosy cheek; yet Honour gilds
 His high exploits; and downy-pinion'd Sleep
 Sheds a soft opiate o'er his peaceful couch.

See'st thou this, righteous Father! See'st thou this,
 And wilt thou ne'er repay? Shall Good, and Ill,
 Be carried, undistinguish'd, to the Land
 Where all things are forgot?—Ah! no; the Day
 Will come, when Virtue from the cloud shall burst,
 That long obscur'd her Beams; when Sin shall fly
 Back to her native Hell; there sink eclips'd

In

In penal darkness ; where no Star shall rise
Nor ever Sunshine pierce the impervious gloom.

On that great Day, the solemn Trump shall sound,
(That Trump, which once in Heav'n, on Man's revolt,
Convok'd th' astonish'd Seraphs ;) at whose voice
Th' unpeopled Graves shall pour forth all their dead.
Then shall th' assembled nations of the Earth,
From ev'ry Quarter, at the Judgment-Seat
Unite : Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks,
Parthians ; and they who dwelt on Tyber's banks,
Names fam'd of old : or, who, of later age,
Chinese, and Russian, Mexican, and Turk,
Tenant the wide Terrene ; and they who pitch
Their tents on Niger's banks ; or, where the Sun
Pours on Golconda's Spires his early light,
Drink Ganges' sacred stream. At once shall rise,
Whom distant ages to each others fight
Had long denied : Before the Throne shall kneel
Some great Progenitor, while at his side
Stands his Descendant thro' a thousand Lines.
Whate'er their nation, and whate'er their rank,
Heroes, and Patriarchs, Slaves, and sceptred Kings,
With equal eye the God of all shall see ;

And

And judge with equal love, What tho' the Great
 With costly pomp, and aromatic sweets,
 Embalm'd his poor remains; or thro' the Dome
 A thousand tapers shed their gloomy light,
 While solemn organs to his parting soul
 Chaunted slow orisons? Say, by what mark
 Dost thou discern Him from that lowly Swain,
 Whose mouldering bones beneath the thorn-bound turf
 Long lay neglected.—All at once, shall rise;
 But not to equal Glory: for, alas!
 With howlings dire, and execrations loud,
 Some wail their fatal birth.—First among these
 Behold the mighty murth'ers of mankind;
 They, who in sport whole kingdoms slew; or they,
 Who to the tott'ring pinnacle of power
 Waded thro' seas of blood! How will they curse
 The madness of ambition; How lament
 Their dear-bought Laurels; when, the widow'd wife,
 And childless mother, at the Judgment-Seat,
 Plead, trumpet-tongu'd against them!—Here are they,
 Who sunk an aged Father to the Grave:
 Or, with unkindness hard, and cold disdain,
 Slighted a Brother's suff'rings:—Here are they,

Whom

Whom Fraud, and skilful Treachery, long secur'd;
Who from the infant Virgin tore her dow'r,
And eat the Orphan's bread:—who spent their stores
In selfish Luxury; or o'er their gold
Prostrate and pale ador'd the useless heap.—
Here, too, who stain'd the chaste connubial Bed;—
Who mix'd the pois'nous bowl;—or broke the ties
Of hospitable Friendship:—And the Wretch
Whose listless soul, sick with the cares of life,
Unsummon'd to the presence of his God
Rush'd in with insult rude. How would they joy
Once more to visit earth; and, tho' oppress'd
With all that Pain or Famine can inflict,
Pant up the Hill of Life? Vain wish! the Judge
Pronounces doom eternal on their heads,
Perpetual punishment. Seek not to know
What punishment! for that th' Almighty Will
Has hid from mortal eyes. And shall vain Man,
With curious search refin'd, presume to pry
Into thy secrets, Father! No: let him
With humble patience all thy works adore,
And walk in all thy paths: so shall his need

Be

Be great in Heav'n ; so haply shall he 'scape
Th' immortal Worm, and never-ceasing Fire.

But who are they, who bound in ten-fold chains
Stand horribly aghast ? This is that Crew
Who strove to pull Jehovah from His throne,
And in the place of Heaven's eternal King
Set up the Phantom Chance. For them, in vain
Alternate Seasons chear'd the rolling year ;
In vain the Sun o'er Herb, Tree, Fruit, and Flow'r
Shed genial influence, mild ; and the pale Moon
Repair'd her waning orb.—Next these is plac'd
The vile Blasphemer ; He, whose impious Wit
Profan'd the Sacred Mysteries of Faith ;
And 'gainst th' impenetrable walls of Heav'n
Planted his feeble battery.—By these stands
Th' arch-Apostate : He with many a wile
Exhorts them still to foul revolt. Alas !
No hope have they from black Despair, no ray
Shines thro' the gloom to chear their sinking Souls.
In agonies of grief they curse the hour
When first they left Religion's onward way.

These on the left are rang'd : But on the right
A chosen Band appears, who fought beneath

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The Banner of Jehovah, and defy'd
Satan's united Legions. Some, unmov'd
At the grim Tyrant's frown, o'er barb'rous climes
Diffus'd the Gospel's Light: Some, long immur'd,
(Sad servitude!) in chains, and dungeons pin'd:
Or, rack'd with all the agonies of pain,
Breath'd out their faithful lives. Thrice happy They
Whom Heaven elected to that glorious strife!—
Here are they plac'd, whose kind munificence
Made heav'n-born Science raise her drooping head;
And on the labours of a future Race
Entail'd their just reward.—Thou, amongst These,
Good SEATON, whose well-judg'd benevolence,
Fost'ring fair Genius, bad the Poet's hand
Bring annual off'rings to his Maker's shrine,
Shalt find the generous care was not in vain.—
Here is that fav'rite Band, whom Mercy mild,
God's best lov'd Attribute adorn'd; whose gate
Stood ever open to the Stranger's call;
Who fed the Hungry; to the Thirsty lip
Reach'd out the friendly cup: whose care benign
From the rude blast secur'd the Pilgrim's side;
Who heard the Widow's tender tale; and shook

The galling shackle from the Prisoner's feet :
 Who each endearing tye, each office knew,
 Of meek-ey'd heav'n-descended Charity.—
 O ^{Yone} Charity, thou Nymph-divinely fair !
 Sweeter than those, whom antient Poets bound
 In Amity's indissoluble chain,
 The Graces ! How shall I essay to paint
 Thy charms, celestial Maid ; and in rude verse,
 Blazon those deeds thy self did'st ne'er reveal ?
 For Thee nor rankling Envy can infect,
 Nor Rage transport, nor high o'erweening Pride
 Puff up with vain conceit : ne'er didst thou smile
 To see the Sinner, as a verdant Tree,
 Spread his luxuriant branches o'er the stream ;
 While, like some blasted Trunk, the Righteous fall,
 Prostrate, forlorn.—When Prophecies shall fail,
 When Tongues shall cease, when Knowledge is no more,
 And this Great Day is come ; Thou by the Throne
 Shalt sit triumphant.—Thither, lovely Maid,
 Bear me, O bear me on thy soaring wing ;
 And thro' the Adamantine Gates of Heav'n
 Conduct my steps ; safe from the fiery Gulph,
 And dark Abyss, where Sin and Satan reign !

But

But can the Muse, her numbers all too weak,
Tell, how that restless Element of Fire
Shall wage with Seas and Earth intestine war,
And deluge all Creation? Whether, (so
Some think) the Comet, as thro' fields of air
Lawless He wanders, shall rush headlong on,
Thwarting th' Ecliptic, where th' unconscious Earth
Rolls in her wonted course: Whether the Sun,
With force centripetal into his orb
Attract her long reluctant: or the Caves,
Those dread Vulcanoes, where engend'ring lye
Sulphureous Minerals, from their dark Abyss
Pour streams of liquid fire; while from above,
As erst on Sodom, Heav'n's avenging Hand
Rains fierce combustion.—Where are, now, the works
Of Art, the toil of Ages? Where are, now,
Th' Imperial Cities, Sepulchres, and Domes,
Trophies, and Pillars?—Where is Egypt's boast,
Those lofty Pyramids which high in air
Rear'd their aspiring Heads, to distant times
Of Memphian Pride a lasting monument?—
Tell me, where Athens rais'd her towers?—Where Thebes
Open'd her Hundred Portals?—Tell me, where

Stood

But

Stood sea-girt Albion?—Where Imperial Rome,
Propt by Seven Hills, sat like a sceptred Queen,
And aw'd the tributary world to peace?—
Shew me the Rampart, which o'er many a hill,
Thro' many a valley stretch'd its wide extent,
Rais'd by that mighty Monarch, to repell
The roving Tartar, when with insult rude
'Gainst Pekin's towers he bent th' unerring Bow.

But what is mimic Art? ev'n Nature's works,
Seas, Meadows, Pastures, the meand'ring Streams,
And everlasting Hills shall be no more.
No more shall Teneriff, cloud-piercing height,
O'er-hang th' Atlantic Surge.—Nor that fam'd cliff,
Thro' which the Persian steer'd with many a sail,
Throw to the Lemnian Isle its evening shade
O'er half the wide Ægean.—Where are now
The Alps, that confin'd with unnumber'd realms,
And from the Black Sea to the Ocean stream
Stretch'd their extended arms?—Where's Ararat,
That Hill on which the faithful Patriarch's Ark
Which seven long months had voyag'd o'er its top
First rested, when the Earth, with all her Sons,
As now by streaming cataracts of fire,

Was

Was whelm'd by mighty waters?—All at once
Are vanish'd, and dissolv'd: no trace remains,
No mark of vain distinction: Heaven itself,
That azure vault with all those radiant orbs
Sinks in the universal ruin lost.—

No more shall Planets round their central Sun
Move in harmonious dance; no more the Moon
Hang out her silver lamp: and those Fix'd Stars
Spangling the golden canopy of night,
Which oft the Tuscan with his optic glass
Call'd from their wond'rous height, to read their names,
And magnitude, some winged minister
Shall quench: and (surest sign that all on earth
Is lost) shall rend from Heaven the mystic Bow.

Such is that awful, that tremendous Day,
Whose coming who shall tell? for as a Thief
Unheard, unseen, it steals with silent pace
Thro' Night's dark gloom.—Perhaps as here I set,
And rudely carol these incondite Lays,
Soon shall the Hand be check'd, and dumb the Mouth
That lisps the fault'ring strain.—O! may it ne'er
Intrude unwelcome on an ill-spent hour;

But

16 THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, &c.

But find me wrapt in meditations high,
Hymning my great Creator!

“ Power supreme!

“ O everlasting King! to Thee I kneel;

“ To Thee I lift my voice. With fervent heat

“ Melt all ye Elements! And Thou, high Heav’n,

“ Shrink, like a shrivell’d Scroll!—But think, O Lord,

“ Think on the best, the noblest of thy works;

“ Think on thine own bright image! Think on Him,

“ Who dy’d to save Us from thy righteous wrath;

“ And ’midst the wreck of worlds remember Man!”



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